(e) the number of fishermen belonging to Gujarat State?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (e) On 15th August 2008, Pakistan released 34 juveniles from amongst the Indian fishermen. In the year 2008, Pakistan has released in all 131 fishermen. Presently there are 435 Indian fishermen, including those from Gujarat State, in Pakistani custody.

Attack on Indian Embassy

694. SHRI RAJ KUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a suicide bomber blasted some portion of Indian Embassy in Kabul on 7th July, 2008;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of persons of Indian origin including Embassy staff and others killed/injured in the incidents;

(d) whether anybody owned responsibilities for the incident; and

(e) if so, the details thereof and if not, the action Government has taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (c) On 7th July 2008, at 0831 local time, a vehicle borne improvised explosive device was exploded by a suicide bomber near the entrance gate of the Indian Embassy in Kabul. The attack resulted in the tragic deaths of Shri V.V. Rao, Counsellor, Brig. R.D. Mehta, Defence Attach in the Embassy and their Afghan driver Mr. Neamatullah who were in an Embassy vehicle. Constable Ajay Singh Pathania (ITBP), Constable Roop Singh (ITBP) and 55 Afghan nationals (including 11 security personnel and 17 schoolchildren) were also killed. More than 150 persons received injuries. A large number of vehicles, both inside and outside the Chancery premises, were badly damaged. The Chancery building was also badly damaged. The attack on our Embassy was a dastardly terrorist attack perpetrated by the enemies of peace in Afghanistan and our region.

(d) and (e) No one has claimed the responsibility for the attack. There have been detailed investigations by the Afghan Security Agencies and our own agencies into the attack. Investigations to identify all the perpetrators are continuing.

Demands of Haj Sewa Samiti

695. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Haj Sewa Samiti has lately demonstrated outside Parliament House in New Delhi and other cities in the country;

(b) if so, their precise demands; and

(c) Government's response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Yes. One organization called the Haj Sewa Samiti has demanded for:

(1) Grant of autonomous status and delegation of more powers to the Haj Committee of India (HCOI) and State Haj Committees by way of appropriate amendments in the Haj Committee Act, 2002; and